

Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: April 9, 2014
6:00pm-8:00pm

Location: City Hall, Boards and Commissions Room (L280)

Members Present: Lydia Heard, Devor Barton, Anna Spooner, Jacob Struiksmā, Jeffrey Linn, David Goldberg, Lillian Berticevich, Mark Landreneau, Joanne Donohue

Attendees: Tanna Shoyo, Mark Brasslet, Tom Noble, Tim O'neill, Aly Pennucci, Kristian Kofed, Jack Wilken, Ari Wilken, Kevin O'Neill, Howard Wu, Sarah Wright, Eric Tweit

6:10 pm – Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan update (Nicolas Welch, DPD) – 30 min

6:40 pm – Pedestrian Retail Areas (Aly Pennucci, DPD) – 30 min

7:10 pm – Mercer Street West project (Eric Tweit, SDOT) – 30 min

7:40 pm – Board updates – 20 min

MEETING CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 pm

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL: March meeting minutes approved

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Tom Noble: is interested in Mercer Street project portion of today's agenda. It's been a challenge as a pedestrian to get through there, so he's interested in what SDOT has to say about that and what SPAB will do about it. Tom suggests a bridge and sidewalks on Terry.
- Jack Wilken: doesn't walk across the Fremont Bridge anymore. Going north, a sign says "Yield to Pedestrians" but, as a pedestrian, he is often assaulted by bicycles. Bicycles are going at a speed at which they can't respond to pedestrians, which is contradictory to the expectation we hold of cars. On the Fremont Bridge and Westlake, the balance between pedestrians and bicyclists seems unbalanced
 - Charlie: Is it reasonable to ask bikers to dismount? Or, are there other ways to make bikers pay attention to the yield requirement?
 - Mark: Is there a need for enforcement?
 - Police have noted many issues but this doesn't seem to apply to bicycles.
 - Kevin (SDOT): City code is that bikers are supposed to slow for pedestrians, so this could be an enforcement issue. This year they're funded to study the access points across the bridges. They will be looking at how to move forward with designing spaces. 1st open house: later this spring.
 - Is there a conversation about how to redirect the message? The City is encouraging both more biking and pedestrian use. The bike counter on the Fremont Bridge shows amazing bike use (up to 4,000 bikers/day). So, as bike use has increased, ped-bike conflicts have gotten worse.

Suggestions for Jack: Connect with Bike Board and Cascade Bike Club.

PRESENTATIONS

Time: 6:08pm

Topic: Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan update

Presenters: Kristian Kofed (Department of Planning & Development- DPD), Kevin O'neill (Department of Transportation- SDOT)

- The City is required to do an update to the major comprehensive plan every 7-10 years, based on population growth. This is the vision for the next 20 years.
- Have new household and job growth statistics.
- Three facets of the 2035 Plan: Urban Center Focus, Urban Village Focus, Transit Focus
- DPD will recommend an ordinance to the mayor, who sends a recommendation to City Council.
- State law requires using information related to transportation, housing, and utilities. Optional: cultural resources, neighborhood plans. We have an extensive Comprehensive Plan, and the review process is extensive.
- Motivating issues: new light rail legs, climate change, healthy living/food
- Jacob: How does this Plan accommodate the Pedestrian Master Plan?
 - The Comprehensive Plan is highest level plan of goals and policies for accommodating growth.
 - Since the 2004 Transportation Plan, we have many more detailed plans to review (including the Pedestrian Master Plan). They will review and look at all of these plans to help with the directions of the Comp. Plan. Part of their work: sifting through transit plans and deciding which goals/objectives belong in the larger abstract Comp. Plan (which intentionally doesn't detail specific actions).
- David: What is the goal of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)? It seems odd to have this since this Plan is so conceptual.
 - The Comp. Plan is still open for public comment, and they're still reviewing it based on comments received. They encourage SPAB to send comments.
 - It's a legal decision to do an EIS to see what the potential impacts from the Plan may be.
 - In land use and transportation planning: what you're planning is based on what's presently going on *and* what the future may look like. Transportation analysis: they're assuming projects that are already funded will be completed. These considerations will be part of the EIS conversation.
- Jacob: But, the Transportation Master Plan has a lot of unfunded projects in it, so your plan should accommodate this, right?
 - They've talked to DPD about wanting to do that.
 - Also, there's an urban design element which may incorporate some of Jacob's comments about specifics like sidewalk width and signage, for example.
- Lydia: It seems all areas of Seattle will have continued growth, so how are you selecting one area over another for your analysis on the Urban Center Focus, Urban Village Focus, and Transit Focus?
 - They also assume there will be growth throughout Seattle, but this plan and policy aims to help direct that growth.
 - Jeffrey: these three things aren't mutually exclusive, but the way it's explained makes it look like they are.
 - This is a point for clarification: these focused alternatives are necessary for comparisons in EIS.
- David: what sort of market analysis go into this and into understanding demographics

and thinking about how modes of transportation, with new technology, has changed?

- They are looking at these trends and community factors.
- They're identifying things like transportation sharing, and deciding about what to do from there.
- This is an opportunity to accommodate and reflect new realities in our Plan.
- Jacob: Does this look at where people will want to live based on where transit is and where it will be planned?
 - Absolutely.
- Joanne: What about the aging population? It's important to plan for the aging population.
 - Absolutely- 'aging in place.' The goal is to link transportation to people's lives and where they want to work, play, shop, etc.
 - And, this is really the most Comprehensive Plan that the city has. Pedestrian topics have a place in so many of the Plan's elements.
- Lydia: Do this 20-year Plan and smaller level plans accommodate for changes?
 - There are annual amendments that accommodate for specific changes. But, these changes may just be recognized at a functional specific level because it may not affect the Comp. Plan. But, then for the next Comp. Plan they'll review the specific plans again.

Time: 6:40 pm

Topic: Pedestrian Retail Areas

Presenters: Aly Pennucci (DPD)

- Pedestrian Retail Areas are also called the Pedestrian Zone

OVERVIEW

- The City uses Ped. Zone designation to preserve and encourage an intense retail and pedestrian-oriented shopping district.
- This is a zoning designation, compared to a design approach.
- Ped. Zone designation generally allow certain uses and prohibits others:
 - Requires that 80% of buildings at street level are activated by pedestrian-use services
 - Prohibits/prevents auto-uses (like gas stations, offices)
 - Waives some parking requirements, reduces amt. of parking have to provide
 - Parking has to be provided within or behind buildings. (The intent is to limit disruptions in pedestrian areas.)
 - Arts uses are only allowed currently in Pike/Pine Pedestrian Zone.
- This is part of commercial zoning.
- Connection to Ped. Master Plan: vibrant pedestrian zones

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

- This project has started and stopped many times over the years.
- Now: they've reviewed 56 areas zoned as "neighborhood commercial." These 56 areas are being studied to consider if the Pedestrian Zone designation is appropriate. They're considering: uses allowed at street level, sidewalk width and design requirements, and overhead weather protection.
- This is the first time they're looking outside of urban villages. They're trying to use their 'future goggles' and figure out where commercial services will be needed as growth continues.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

- Preliminary analysis included:
 - Site visits to all areas
 - Evaluating each area using the re-zone criteria, including looking closely at Ped.

Master Plan and sidewalk conditions, and seeing how much these areas are prioritized for use.

- Community conversation with meetings
- Evaluated: car crash types, frequencies, walk score, curb cuts/drive way crossings, Ped. Master Plan priorities
- Preliminary recommendations: 39 (70%) recommended for Ped. Zone designation, 17% were not.
 - Some neighborhoods were not willing to wait for the zoning to take its effects and were more interested in letting the market decide. Also, if not within ¼ mile of Ped Zone, more likely.
 - Their approach for each area was that “if in doubt, go for this zoning.”
- Just over 1% now of Seattle is designated as a Pedestrian Zone. If all suggested areas are approved, it will be just over 2%.

ADDITIONAL REGULATIONS

- They’re looking into how people are getting to the pedestrian zones and will be coordinating with public transportation. How do you balance all demands in the right of way?
- Lydia: right of way requirements changed, now under SDOT’s purview.
- Timeline: final stages of gathering input and analysis.
- David: What were the cut points for the areas not recommended for the zoning designation?
 - SE along Rainier: That part of the city has had other recent work and a retail analysis. There was a clear community desire to be able to build commercial without any additional zoning restrictions.
 - Stone Way: 45th area is already doing well with other Ped. Zoning, and people want to let that play out more organically.
 - NE: some areas were not good for transit or ped. access.
 - 15th corridor in Ballard: too long of a stretch for this zoning to be effective.
- Lily: Can you generalize the qualities of the areas that *did* make the cut?
 - Varying: Some areas don’t yet have a fully thriving business district, but have potential, and this could allow for more investment. Some areas doing well and could use the protection this zoning offers.
- Jacob: What about the minimum FAR (floor to area ratio)?
 - This is still required- rules that apply to street level commercial zoning still apply.
- Jeffrey: is there a more city-wide goal about what happens with pedestrian zones? One pedestrian frustration is that there are lots of little zones without connections between nodes, though it is great that if this pedestrian zoning is expanding.
 - They’re trying to balance *not* over-doing the pedestrian zoning requirements. Hopefully, even between two nodes it feels safe and interesting to walk.

Time: 7:30pm

Topic: Mercer Street West project

Presenters: Eric Tweit, SDOT

- Eric spoke to SPAB about a year ago and is here to give an update.
- Project description:
 - Project encompasses: Mercer, I-5 on and off ramps, to Dexter, where the west phase begins.
 - The east side of project is complete.
 - Aurora & 5th Ave N improvements.

- Mercer and Roy St will be 2-way. There will be a lot of work at intersections. New ADA ramps.
- Tanna: Domes can be slick and slippery.
- Mercer underpass under Aurora: wider sidewalks, bike paths, replace SR 99 Bridge, 2-way traffic on Mercer and Roy.
- Substantial completion: Fall 2015
- Construction update:
 - Replaced bridge over SR99
 - Updated utilities
 - Widened Mercer St. to the south.
 - N. Access project will continue, with no ped. access during construction to end of 2015
- City Light wanted light upgrades around Seattle Center, so they installed conduits and 4 blocks of new sidewalk.
- The area west of 5th Ave. North will be done in June and the triangle will be done.
- Broad Street from 5th Ave. N and E will be permanently closed.
- Mercer updates:
 - Will be 2-way, should only have short-term interruptions for pedestrians
 - Will fill in Broad Street under Mercer
 - Want to demolish existing bridge structure
 - Will shift the Mercer/Dexter intersection, so everything will be squeezed down
 - Hope to keep bike lanes open the whole time
- Target date to close Broad Street: June
- Public comment: There is no sidewalk on Terry, which is the most direct route to MOHAI. Also, is there any plan for a stairway off Aurora to Mercer?
 - Terry: Per an agreement with Falkin, they will make build those improvements of 3 blocks but is unsure of the timeline.
 - No stairway from Aurora is planned.

Time: 7:51pm

Topic: Board Updates

- Committee self-selection: 4 committees that would help with SPAB work and goals. There are some letters of support requested.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT: 8:03pm